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24 May 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : Deputy Director for Intelligence

SUBJECT : What Do We Ask of the Soviets in the  
Third World?

1. Per our conversation yesterday, three areas in the Third World are of central priority to the United States: Central America, the Middle East (Syria), and Southern Africa.

-- On Syria, with a background of strong US military support for Israel, the Secretary's warnings to the Soviets have great credibility and, in my view, will reinforce Soviet caution in trying to push the Syrians too far. They do not want a peace settlement, but war is not in their interest and they know it.

-- With respect to Southern Africa, we could seek an end to Soviet support to SWAPO, to Angola, and/or to Mozambique. With their (Cuban) forces in place in Angola, our prospects for progress depend wholly on encouraging internal Angolan forces who wish to get rid of the Soviets and the Cubans. The prospects for success are not bright. The political situation is more complex for Maputo and only US preparedness to replace Soviet and Cuban help to protect Machel against the South Africans could lead him away from his present course. Soviet aid to SWAPO is relatively modest and any arrangement to end it would be difficult to monitor.

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2. Thus, we are brought back to our first priority -- ending Soviet and Cuban subversion and promotion of subversion in Central America. Here several arrangements are possible:

-- A broad agreement in which the Soviets would agree that they and the Cubans would stop all outside support of the insurgency in El Salvador, including that coming from Nicaragua, and end the Nicaraguan military build up. In return, the US would agree to certain specific arrangements with respect to economic relations with Poland, agree to end its support of the anti-Sandinista forces in Nicaragua, provide assurances not to try

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overthrowing the Sandinistas and proceed with bilateral aspects of the US-USSR relationship (including cultural agreements and consulates in Kiev/New York).

- Alternatively, a narrower agreement by the Soviets that neither they nor the Cubans would insert combat forces of any kind into Nicaragua (or continue the arms buildup there) in return for which the United States would agree to end its support for anti-Sandinista forces. [REDACTED]

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3. The truth of the matter is that I have thought about this constantly since we talked and I always end up back where I started. The above-stated deals or any like them that we can consider involve our making specific commitments which we are very likely to keep while extracting promises from the Soviets that they are virtually certain to circumvent or fail to fulfill in one way or another. If the Sandinista regime is genuinely threatened, by internal opponents, the Soviets and Cubans will find a way to provide additional support. A Soviet commitment to forgo external support to the insurgency in El Salvador would be worthless because it could not be monitored and any evidence of outside support could simply be denied by the Soviets. Moreover, I strongly believe the Soviets would not agree to any such arrangements in the first instance. [REDACTED]

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4. The fact is that we should take a leaf from our own book in Israel. The Secretary of State's warning to the Soviets on Israel and Syria has credibility because the Soviets believe we would use force to defend our interests and our allies. We don't need to offer anything; we don't need to promise anything. The warning itself has credibility. This is not true in most other places in the Third World. The State Department keeps insisting, as the Secretary has, that we ask something specific of the Soviets and in return for that we will offer them some cornucopia of goodies in the bilateral relationship. My greatest frustration over the past eight years has been my failure to convince people that Soviet policy in the Third World does not work like that. It is not an add-on; it is not an adventuristic kind of policy conceived as a possible trade-off. It is a fundamental element of Soviet foreign policy. They will not forgo their activities, specifically or generally, in the Third World for anything we can promise -- including a major arms control agreement, as Jimmy Carter found out to his regret. Only the prospect of a strong US response can produce Soviet restraint, as in Iran and the Middle East. [REDACTED]

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5. My view is that your formulation of last Friday still holds the best prospect for any progress. I believe that the President should call in Dobrynin (and Hartman simultaneously should see Gromyko) to convey the following message:

- The United States is interested in halting the continuing deterioration in US-Soviet relations.

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- To this end, the United States is prepared to undertake negotiations on a new cultural exchange agreement and also on the opening of consulates in Kiev and New York City.
- Beyond this, the President is considering attending the General Assembly at the UN this fall and, should General Secretary Andropov plan to be present, the President believes there would be some value in the two of them meeting privately at the UN to discuss issues of mutual interest.
- At the same time, the United States wishes to ensure that there is no miscalculation or misunderstanding in an area of key strategic concern to the United States -- developments in Central America. The United States is prepared to defend and will defend its interests in this region, consistent with historical experience. The Soviet Union should be aware that the dispatch of modern fighter aircraft to Nicaragua or the dispatch of Cuban or other combat forces to Nicaragua is unacceptable to the United States and will not be permitted by it. Such deployments would be blocked by force. 25X1

6. In my view, for maximum impact, the President ought to make these comments to Dobrynin himself in the White House. It is worth remembering, however, that this continues a long line of American rhetoric for the last eight years. Push will come to shove and the United States will have to act. Side deals on the Third World are simply not in the cards. 25X1

Robert M. Gates

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